

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Representatives from Puget Sound Energy will be present and will introduce members of their Community Advisory Group (CAG) who will share comments about their experience so far with this component of PSE's outreach on Energize Eastside. Then Council will also hear from city staff about the information, comment, and observations that our citizens shared at the June 3, 2014, city-sponsored Community Forum on Energize Eastside.

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POLICY ISSUES

The City of Bellevue has the authority to regulate land use and, under the Growth Management Act, the requirement to consider the location of existing and proposed utilities and potential utility corridors in land use planning. The City must also plan for the provision of utilities consistent with the goals and objectives of its Comprehensive Plan, taking into consideration the public service obligation of the utility involved.

Bellevue's guiding principles in electrical facilities planning:

- We recognize that siting major, new infrastructure in a well-established city such as Bellevue is complex and will require tough decisions.
- A reliable power supply is important to Bellevue residents, businesses, and stakeholders today and will be critical as we form our future.
- The City is engaging with PSE on the Energize Eastside project and will continue to look for opportunities to ensure the public's questions and concerns are addressed by PSE.
- Now is the time for the public to learn more about Energize Eastside and express their preferences.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

☐ Action
☐ Discussion
☒ Information

The June 16 Study Session is the third in a series of Council engagements scheduled to inform the City Council about scope of the Energize Eastside project, hear the questions and concerns expressed by members of the community, and understand the regulatory framework that will guide the review and assessment process leading to a permit decision.

The City's web site www.electrical-facilities-planning@bellevuewa.gov is up. It will be used as a central repository for information related to the Energize Eastside project, including frequently asked questions.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Community Advisory Group (CAG) panel

The Community Advisory Group was formed by PSE to broadly represent Eastside communities and includes the following Bellevue representatives:

- Robert Shay - Wilburton Community Association
- Barbara Sauerbray - Woodridge Community Association (alt.)
- Norm Hansen - Bridle Trails Community Club
- Lindy Bruce - Sunset Community Association (alt.)
- Steve O'Donnell - Somerset Community Association
- Scott Kaseburg - Lake Lanes Association (alt.)
- Jack McLeod - Bellevue School District
- Nicola Barnes - Hopelink
- Sam Baxter - Overlake Hospital Medical Center
- David Hoffman – Master Builders
- Paul Lwali – YMCA
- Nicholas Matz – City ex officio staff representative

Community Advisory Group process

The CAG purpose is three-fold: to learn about PSE's proposed route segments; to collaborate with PSE to develop a community values-based evaluation process to consider the various route segments and determine a recommended route, and to provide a forum for the community to give meaningful input to PSE on route segments and options.

CAG members were asked to represent at the table not only their own communities but also those without direct representation.

The CAG has held three of six scheduled meetings. The first two meetings set group expectations, described the need for the project, and reviewed the analysis conducted by PSE and independent experts used to identify proposed segments. The third meeting, held on June 4, 2014, reviewed and discussed outcomes from the geographic subarea meetings, identified the evaluation factors that would be used for a blind evaluation of route segments, and discussed additional data needed to inform the route evaluation process.

PSE used a geographically-specific subarea committee workshop process to provide segment-specific considerations and concerns, score the route segments using identified evaluation factors and data, and develop key findings to share back with the CAG.

The three subareas were North (generally north of SR 520), Central (between SR 520 and Coal Creek Parkway), and South (from the parkway down to Rentons usingot Hill substation). A series consisting of two workshops and an evaluation meeting were held for each of these subarea groups. All interested parties were asked to attend and to participate in the series, and each CAG member was expected to attend for their area (for example Kirkland CAG members primarily attended the North series, and Renton and Newcastle CAG members primarily attended the South series.) Bellevue has jurisdiction in all three geographic subareas, and many CAG members attended more than one sub-area workshop series. City staff also attended all three in the series.

The CAG is scheduled to meet four more times between June and December 2014.

Community Forum

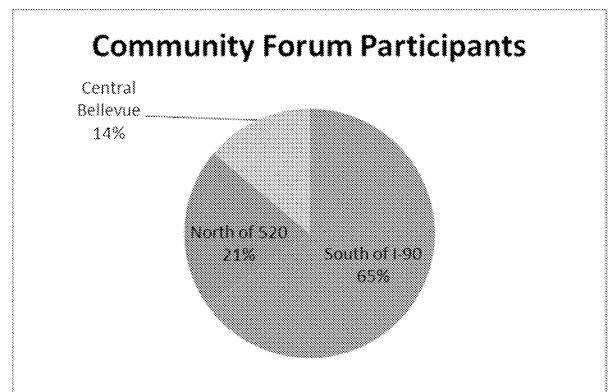
Nearly 275 people attended the June 3, 2014 city-sponsored Community Forum on PSE's Energize Eastside project. The video of the oral comments and the complete Community Forum report are linked on the web site at <http://www.bellevuewa.gov/electrical-facilities.htm>.

Councilmember Lynne Robinson introduced the evening as “a night for listening” and expressed appreciation for the civility and constructiveness of the communities' involvement on this issue. Brad Miyake, City Manager, and Mike Brennan, Director of Development Services, provided introductions to City staff that are working on this project: Carol Helland, Land Use Division Director and Bellevue's SEPA-responsible official; Mike McCormick Huentelman, City of Bellevue Neighborhood and Community Outreach Manager; Nicholas Matz AICP, Senior Planner in Planning and Community Development; and David Pyle, Senior Planner Development Services.

The community provided feedback and input through written comments and oral communication. Table topics were arranged in the Concourse, soliciting written comments on: Community Engagement, Neighborhood Character, Public Health, Environmental Impacts, Alternatives to Consider, Need for Expanded Capacity and General Comments and Questions. Additionally, thirty people took the opportunity to share their comments to the City in the Council Chambers. Written letters and email were also compiled (received from May 27 to June 6) and added to the report.

The people who attended the Community Forum largely represent neighborhoods directly impacted from the proposed PSE routes. From the information gathered from the sign-in sheets, 33% of the total participants came from the neighborhood of Somerset, 21% came from Bridle Trails, 13% from Lake Lanes, 10% from Greenwich Crest, 7% from Woodridge and the remaining from other potentially impacted neighborhoods.

Over 65% of the participants were from south of I-90.



The community appreciated the opportunity to express input into this project and welcomed Council's interest in hearing their concerns and identifying the dominant themes that of importance to Bellevue's neighborhoods and residents. A summary of the highlighted themes follows:

Community Engagement – There was frustration with PSE's Community Advisory Group (CAG) outreach process and the limitation for the public to choose among proposed route segments. Residents had unanswered questions regarding the data used to determine the need for new 230kV transmission lines, alternatives for non-wire solutions and had lost faith in the process by which 'preferred routes' would be determined. There was a desire for a community engagement process that did not 'pit neighborhood against neighborhood'.

Neighborhood Character – There were a number of references to Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan, mentioning policy to both preserve the natural beauty of being a "City in a Park" and "ensuring that new and expanding electrical facilities [were] sensitive to neighborhood character." Residents were highly concerned about impacts to property values, residential views and the overall beauty and character of the neighborhoods. New overhead transmission lines on tall poles (ranging to 135 feet) were referenced as 'industrial blight' and described to be 'out of character' for Bellevue as a world-class city.

Public Health – There was concern about the health impacts of long-term exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF) generated by 230kV transmission lines – especially on children. Additionally, residents were concerned about the dangers and risk involved by any proposed route segment too close to the Olympic pipeline. Greenwich Crest residents also expressed concern about potential landslides resulting from the impacts of tree removal on the steep slopes adjacent to their community. Interference with back-up emergency 911 communication such as ham radios, and noise impacts such as the corona discharge (which could result in constant buzzing) were also mentioned as concerns.

Environmental Impacts – The loss of Bellevue's tree canopy was of significant concern and viewed as irreversible, fundamentally changing the character of the impacted neighborhoods. Wildlife and fish habitat were all identified as potentially negatively impacted.

Alternatives to Consider - Other areas of the country facing this issue have come up with solutions that are not towers. Residents believed that alternatives to the proposed overhead alignments had not been fully and independently verified. These alternatives included:

1. Undergrounding was clearly favored as alternative; tradeoff high cost with community benefit. Residents would like realistic cost estimates and potential funding approaches considered for review.
2. Seattle City Light corridor: Seek a coordinated and long-term approach in which regional utilities work together on an eastside corridor solution. The corridor was identified as the best solution if we couldn't afford undergrounding. However, comments from people living near the existing SCL corridor strongly opposed this option.
3. Submerging cables in Lake Washington
4. Distributed Generation (e.g. solar)

5. Utilizing new technologies including storage batteries, other sources such as wind and solar, solar roadways, better battery storage at existing substations, and finding other areas of the country as examples.
6. Examine other corridors instead: I-90, I-405, existing 500kV east of Lake Sammamish, industrial/commercial areas (e.g. Factoria) over residential (e.g. Somerset).

Need for Expanded Capacity – Residents wanted the solution to be in scale to a real need, but were not satisfied with the data provided to determine the need for new 230kV transmission lines. There were questions regarding how much capacity and growth goes to Bellevue versus the region and other areas such as California and Canada. There was a desire for more data on understanding how capacity is measured and forecasted. Additionally, people questioned the adequacy of the 13-year life of the project. Independent analysis was desired for capacity forecasts, data on projected future demand, other technologies and costs for alternative solutions.

General Comments – The community was skeptical of the urgency of PSE's need to build new capacity by 2018 and encouraged the City to take the time needed to 'do it right'. It was thought the City of Bellevue should take a leadership role. All alternative non-wire solutions should be thoroughly examined, complete with cost and funding options. There was strong support for hiring an independent review. Residents were looking to the City to protect its neighborhoods and preserve the beauty of the City for future generations.

Council role in Energize Eastside project

During Oral Communications at its May 12, 2014, Study Session Council heard from representatives of over 100 residents on Energize Eastside's community outreach process. Acknowledging that siting major infrastructure creates more questions than answers in the early stages, Council expressed its desire to be informed and involved (to the extent appropriate for an agency with ultimate permitting authority) in early discussions regarding selection of the Energize Eastside alignment. The City Council also expressed a desire to ensure that the public outreach process was adequate for a project of the size and complexity of Energize Eastside, and that PSE was being responsive to citizen concerns. Specifically, Council member discussion clarified that an appropriate City engagement process on the Energize Eastside project would address:

1. How the different alignment routes would affect City property;
2. How the different alignment routes align with City policy;
3. The role of the Washington Utilities and Trade Commission (WUTC) in verifying the project need and how the project is paid for;
4. The role of the Community Advisory Group and how to provide opportunities for the Council to hear from the Bellevue representatives (**tonight**);
5. How neighborhood groups will be engaged; and,
6. The Council's role.

Next Steps

The next step in the Engagement Process is to provide the City Council with a briefing on the policy and regulatory framework applicable electrical utility planning and permitting. Staff will provide

information regarding agency involvement and information regarding policies and codes that govern the siting and mitigation of electrical facilities in Bellevue. The decision making process for the environmental review and permitting will be described, as well as the relationship of the Energize Eastside project to other projects/programs (i.e., Electrical Reliability). This next briefing is anticipated in July.

AVAILABLE IN THE COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY:

- Public Comments document on Energize Eastside Community Forum